



Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District  
14306 Park Avenue, Victorville, CA 92392  
(760) 245-1661

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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For further information contact:

Violette Roberts, Community Relations & Education Manager

Mojave Desert AQMD (760) 245-1661 ext. 6104

**HIGH DESERT WRAPS UP CLEANEST  
SMOG SEASON ON RECORD**

Victorville – It's official: in 2004, High Desert residents breathed the cleanest air in the region's monitored history, with only two days exceeding the federal .12 parts per million (ppm) one-hour ozone standard between May and October, Southern California's official "smog season."

The two exceedances – both which were logged at the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's (MDAQMD's) Hesperia air monitoring station - represent a 97% reduction from a decade ago, when 77 exceedances of the federal health standard were recorded within the MDAQMD's boundaries, which encompass San Bernardino County's High Desert and Riverside County's Palo Verde Valley.

Prior to the summer of 2004, 2001 and 2003 tied for the lowest number of unhealthful days recoded locally, with three federal ozone exceedances logged during each year. In 2001 and 2003, maximum ozone concentrations topped out at .15 ppm and .16 ppm, respectively. In contrast, the maximum ozone level measured during 2004 was a .14 ppm measured in Hesperia.

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Not surprisingly, the High Desert's 2004 ozone readings also compared favorably with those measured in the South Coast Air Basin, which includes Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties: by November, 27 days had exceeded the federal ozone standard within the SoCAB's boundaries. Nonetheless, good news prevailed, as the South Coast AQMD – the SoCAB's regulatory air agency – also hailed the 2004 smog season as its cleanest in 25 years.

According to Chuck Fryxell, Air Pollution Control Officer for the MDAQMD, the SoCab's record-setting smog season was the main cause of the High Desert's exceptionally clean summer. "The High Desert's air quality is overwhelmingly influenced by windblown air pollutants from the South Coast Basin into the region," stated Fryxell. "As emissions continue to decline in the L.A. basin, the High Desert will reap the benefits in the form of cleaner, more healthful air." Fryxell also credited local industry's emission reduction efforts for contributing to the High Desert's cleanest smog season ever.

Ground level ozone is a strong irritant that can cause constriction of the airways, forcing the respiratory system to work harder in order to provide oxygen. Children, the elderly and individuals with heart or lung disease are particularly susceptible to the effects of smog, which can also increase symptoms for individuals affected by asthma or bronchitis.

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